

SOME PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH BRACEROS

Results of the interviews conducted with braceros are still too scattered to permit quantification or definitive conclusions. The following impressions, and illustrative non-quantitative materials, are presented with the hope they may suggest criticisms and future turns (or the avoidance of turns) in the conduct of the study. Most of the questions included in the basic schedule (q.v.) are discussed here. They are not necessarily taken up in the order in which they appear on the schedule. In a few cases, where results have been unusually meager, discussion has been postponed until a later date.

1. What was your usual occupation in Mexico?

The substantial majority of our informants were farm workers in Mexico, about half working their own land, the other working as jornaleros (day laborers). A fairly large number of industrial workers have also been encountered. One pre-professional person has been interviewed so far: a student at the University of Mexico, who is working as a bracero in order to earn enough money to return to school.

2. Age: Those interviewed ranged in age between 19 and 50.

(NOTE: The minimum age permissible under the International Agreement is 18; no maximum is specified. Pan-American Underwriters, which writes life insurance for 165,000 or more braceros annually, calculates the average bracero's age at 28 years.)

3. Marital status: The great majority of braceros interviewed were married, with relatively large families. The number of children ranged up to 9. Many informants were also supporting other relatives.

4. How many years have you been to school?

Five informants had had no schooling. One man, 49 years old, remarked somewhat wistfully, No se ni poner me nombre (I don't even know how to sign my name). Two informants had completed secondary school (10 years of education) and, as indicated above, one had begun at the University of Mexico. The average for all informants was between 3 and 4 years. There was a pronounced tendency for the younger informants to have had more education than the older informants.

5. Have you been to the U.S. before? About 80% of those interviewed had been to this country before, most of them not once, but several times.

6. How long do you expect to remain here under your present contract?

Almost without exception, the braceros stated that they would like to, and have been lead to believe they will be allowed to, remain in this country 18 months. (NOTE: The contracts are for only 6 weeks, but they can be extended and re-extended, at the option of the employer, to an absolute maximum of 18 months. Then the bracero must return to Mexico for a "furlough". Theoretically, not more than 10% of the men are supposed to be allowed to remain the full 18 months.)

7. What did you have to eat for breakfast this morning? Examples of replies:

- a. 1 pancake; 1 piece of sweet bread; 1 cup of coffee.
- b. 5 tortillas; 2 servings of beans; 2 cups of coffee.
- c. 1 cup of milk; 1 piece of sweet bread.
- d. 2 hotcakes; 2 cups of coffee.
- e. 1 serving of beans with tongue; 1 tortilla; 1 cup coffee.
- f. 1 bean taco; 1 serving oatmeal; 1 cup coffee.
- g. Nothing.

(NOTE: On no occasion has an informant reported eating fruit or eggs for breakfast, although these foods are often served.)

8. What did you have to eat for lunch this noon? Examples of replies:

- a. 5 bean and potato tacos; 1 banana; 1 carton milk.
- b. 3 bean tacos; 2 bottles soda-pop.
- c. 6 egg tacos.
- d. 3 jelly sandwiches; 2 plums; 1 tomato.
- e. 3 beef and bean tacos with wheat flour tortillas.

(NOTE: All the men reported making their lunches in the morning, between 5:00 and 6:00 A.M., and taking the lunches with them to the fields where the temperature was often over 100°. This practice has in the past lead to mass outbreaks of food poisoning, and various official agencies have recommended it be stopped.)

9. What did you have to eat for dinner this evening? Examples of replies:

- a. 1 serving macaroni; 1 serving frijoles; 1 serving canned cherries.
- b. 1 serving sopa; 1 serving rabbit; 4 tortillas; water.
- c. 1 serving chicken; 1 serving frijoles; 8 tortillas; 2 cups water.
- d. 1 serving canned peaches; 1 serving lettuce; 1 serving soup; 1 bottle soda-pop.
- e. 1 serving lamb stew; 6 tortillas; 1 serving frijoles; water.
- f. 1 serving chorizo; 8 tortillas; water.
- g. 1 serving chile con carne; 6 tortillas; 1 Pepsi-Cola.

10. What is your opinion of the food you have been getting?

Most of the men report they are satisfied with the food they are served. A few have volunteered that it is better than that they used to get in Mexico. A sizeable minority dissents, with reasons such as the following:

"They do not give me sufficient food para el cuerpo que trabaja (for the body which works)."

"The fideos (spaghetti, vermicelli) here lack flavor."

"I do not like the food in general. All I can eat are the rice, beans, and soups. The meat has no flavor, and the food is too greasy."

(NOTE: Compare the stereotype, widely held in the U.S., that Mexicans prefer greasy food.)

"Invariably, the eggs they serve us are scrambled."

11. Do you have friends in Mexico who have been to the U.S.?

With only two exceptions, the men reported that other persons from their circle of friends have been to the U.S. In several cases, the informants stated that mas de cien (more than 100) of their friends had been to this country.

12. Has your health insurance ever been discussed with you?

More than three-fourths of the men said that no one had ever explained their health insurance to them. One informant said that he had asked the assistant camp manager at the Strathmore camp, Santa Barbara County, and had been refused any information on the subject. (All braceros are supposed to receive a thorough orientation on the subject of health insurance at the Reception Center at El Centro, and again after arriving in the camp to which they have been assigned.) (See questions 21, 22, and 23, below, in this connection.)

13. What is the name of the doctor who takes care of the men in this camp.

Only two men have been found so far who could identify the doctor who was taking care of the men in their camp.

14. Does the camp doctor speak Spanish?

About a third of the men did not know; about a third said flatly that their doctor does not speak Spanish; about a third said he speaks it mucho muy poquito (very, very little). In one of the latter cases, the doctor has a Spanish-speaking nurse, and in this same camp the mayordomo always accompanies the men to the doctor's office, and can serve as interpreter if need be. In another case where the doctor

speaks Spanish only un poco, there is no interpreter, but the doctor speaks Portuguese, and is able to understand and be understood in an approximate sort of way.

15. What do the men in this camp think of the doctor?

There was great diversity in the answers. One bracero said, "He is good and gentle and a humanitarian." Another said, concerning the same doctor, "Que no sirve ese cabrón." (This old goat is good for nothing)."

In a different camp, some of the opinions were as follows:

"He doesn't give the personal attention he should."

"75% of the men here like him; 25% don't like him."

"The majority do not like him much, because he gives only pills--rarely an injection." (NOTE: Injections appear to be the customary and preferred treatment for most infirmities throughout most of Mexico.)

"The doctor is needed here; the men like him."

"I personally like the doctor, but the other men do not like him; he gives too many pills."

"He is a pill doctor, but the majority like him in spite of this."

"He injects badly; lastima (he hurts)."

"Many of my friends say they receive bad treatment from him. I have a friend whose arm and hand was run over by a tractor. He says the doctor hasn't done much for him. His arm is still swollen and painful. He is not satisfied with the care he has received."

The following account is included as an example of the type of dramatic occurrence which can, and in one camp did, create strong feelings among the men concerning the quality of medical care available to them:

The men as a whole in this camp don't seem to like the doctor. I think the reason for this, or at least one of the reasons, is what happened last week.

There was a very good friend of mine here in camp. He came from my home town (Tepic, Nayarit). He and I went to school together. We grew up together. Last week he died as the result of an accident. But, actually, he died because he lacked the proper attention that he should have received from the camp doctor and from the other doctor that he went to.

It seems that my friend was working on a farm with a grass-seeding machine. He was trying to clear some weeds from the blades of the machine when he received a cut on his index and middle fingers. The cuts in themselves were not too serious, although the cut on the middle finger did reach the bone. He was immediately taken by the mayordomo, Sr. Piedra, to see one of the doctors in the area. This was not the camp doctor. The regular camp doctor was not available. Well, the doctor that attended him sewed up his fingers, put a bandage on them, and sent him back to the camp saying that he would require no more treatment.

Three days after the accident, my friend complained that his hand and arm hurt. He asked Sr. Piedra if he could see the regular camp doctor. My friend told me that Sr. Piedra called up the first doctor that attended him and also called up the camp doctor. And since the first doctor said that he required no further treatment, he was refused a chance to see either one of these doctors again.

A few days after this, my friend complained that the pain had reached his shoulder and that his hand was starting to smell bad. The bandages had, of course, not been changed and they were very dirty. In desperation, my friend finally, one morning, sneaked onto the bus that takes the patients from the camp to see the doctor. But on the way to the doctor's office, Sr. Piedra spied him on the bus and made him get down and walk back to camp. My friend even showed me the exact spot where Sr. Piedra made him get off the bus--it was in front of a little restaurant about half a mile from here.

On the next day after this, my friend again reported to Sr. Piedra. By this time he was seriously ill, and anyone could tell it was so. He was taken to the

camp doctor. The camp doctor saw him and sent him immediately to the General Hospital in Los Angeles. Soon after he arrived at the hospital, he lapsed into a coma and never regained consciousness again. We went to see him once. He, of course, would not talk to us. His throat was horribly inflamed and swollen.

Approximately a week after he entered the General Hospital in Los Angeles, he died. Several of us asked later what the diagnosis of the disease had been, but they told us that it was never known. It might have been gangrene, and then it might have been tetanus. I don't know for sure. They told us that by the time he had arrived at the hospital, it was too late to do anything for him.

Just before my friend died, one of the men from the Mexican Consulate in Los Angeles came around to the camp on an inspection, levantar una acta (to draw up an official document). At this time, we told the Vice-Consul all about the case of our friend, and the way he had been treated by the doctors and by Sr. Piedra. However, the Vice-Consul did not put any of these things into his acta. He did not mention anyone on the camp staff, and I think this might have been due to the fact that he and Sr. Piedra are compadres (close friends).

The body was put in a mortuary in Azusa, and we said rosaries over it for three nights. Finally, after all the legal forms had been obtained from the authorities, the body was taken to Los Angeles and flown to my home town, where my friend had lived all his life. All I know is that there was no reason for my friend to die -- no reason if the doctors and the mayordomo had let him see a doctor when he asked to.

16. Since you have been in the U.S., have there been any times when you were sick? If so, what did you do about it?

Most informants have recalled times they have been ill during their stay in this country. (NOTE: We were prepared for somewhat lower returns on this series of questions, since it is the tradition in Mexico that one should be may macho -- very manly -- and some people feel it is not manly to be sick, or at least to admit that one has been sick.) Most have gone to the camp doctor, although some have sought care elsewhere, or treated themselves. Most have expressed satisfaction with their care. Some examples:

"I fell out of a tree, working at La Verne, and broke my arm. I asked a Mexican-American I was working with what I should do. He took me to a hospital in Pomona. They took some X-Rays. Then I was sent to the camp doctor, and he set the arm. I missed 2 months and 8 days of work. The arm has healed perfectly well now; I am fully satisfied with the treatment I received."

"I was lifting boards last January and developed a pain around the cintura (waist). There was much pain. For eight days the pain was very bad. I asked the mayordomo what I should do, and he sent me to the doctor. The doctor gave me some pills in a little bottle. The pain gradually went away. It still bothers me, but not enough to go back to the doctor again. I treat myself in the camp clinic in the evenings. They have a diathermy lamp there." (Note: This interview was conducted seven months after the accident occurred.)

"One morning, the truck they were taking us to work in turned over at an intersection. They took us to the hospital in Santa Ana. I hurt my hand considerably, but they took some X-Rays of it and found there were no bones broken. The doctor at the hospital gave me an injection. Then I also saw the camp doctor. He gave me some pills. I was off work four days, but am all right now. They attended to us very well."

"I have been working in the parsley. Most of the men who pick the parsley develop a sickness of the skin on their hands. Why don't we wear gloves? Because we would lose "the touch." Well now, I contracted this sickness of the skin. I asked my compañeros what to do about it. They said to wash my hands thoroughly, and they recommended a certain type of pomada (salve) which I bought at the drug store. This didn't do very much good. So I went to the doctor. He gave me a different type of pomada, and gave me four or five injections. I missed ten or

twelve days of work during this time, but finally the doctor's cure worked."

"I have an acquaintance who fell from a ladder while picking oranges and broke his ankle. The doctor put a cast on him, and now the cast is off. The doctor says that my acquaintance is all right and he is able to work. But he is not happy about this, because his ankle hurts him still quite badly."

"When I was working at Porterville, California, I became sick with la gripa (influenza). The reason I got sick was that I was hot, indoors, and went out into the cold air. I bought some aspirin and some cough medicine for myself. They had no doctor in that camp. But there was an evangelista who came into the camp and preached. He said he was a missionary doctor. He gave me some pills which he told me were penicillin. I finally got well, but I wish I could have had an injection of penicillin."

"There is a friend of mine here in camp who had pneumonia, with a fever. The reason he got pneumonia was that he was picking lemons when the trees were wet, and he got his clothes wet, and was chilled all day. I watched over him all the time that he was sick. His sickness lasted eight days, and at the end of ten or twelve days he was cured and was back at work."

"When I was working near Santa Paula earlier this year, I had tonsillitis. It was so bad I couldn't swallow anything for eight days. I couldn't even drink liquids. I asked the camp manager what to do. He sent me to the doctor. The doctor gave me an injection and some pills. I asked him if I could have my tonsils taken out, but he said, "No." I missed 17 days of work on account of this attack of tonsillitis."

17. Have you ever had an X-Ray made of your chest? If so, what for?

All informants recalled having received one or more chest X-Rays. (This is part of the physical exam given all braceros at the El Centro Reception Center). Only one mentioned the word "tuberculosis" in connection with the reason for the X-Ray.

18. Have you been vaccinated against any diseases?

Every informant stated that he had been vaccinated, most of them several times. All but two informants knew that the purpose of their vaccination was the prevention of smallpox. Only two reported that they had been inoculated against other diseases in addition to smallpox: one typhoid, one la gripa.

19. Have you ever had a specimen of blood taken from your arm? If so, what for?

Those who had entered the U.S. since April, reported that a blood sample was drawn at El Centro. (Note: The USPHS began a program of serological testing at that time.) Only one informant identified the detection of syphilis as the purpose of the procedure.

20. How much do you pay for your insurance?

All but three men knew the amount which is being withheld from their paychecks for off-the-job health insurance. (\$1.00 per month.)

21. If you had to have a tooth pulled, would you have to pay for it, or would the insurance pay for it?

Two informants had no idea. Of the remainder, all but two believed they would have to pay for an extraction themselves. Some had had the experience, and had paid on their own. For example:

"I have been bothered for some time with pyorrhea. Pus has been coming out of my gums. I asked the mayordomo what I ought to do. He suggested I go to the drug store. I did so. I bought some medicine for \$2.00. It is called Phylorinoe. It has done me no good. So I went to the mayordomo again. He said I should go to a dentist. I went to a dentist in a town near here. All

he did for me was to pull a tooth. He didn't do anything for my pyorrhea. I thought I would get some treatment for that, but I didn't. My gums are still bothering me a great deal, and I feel very badly. The extraction cost me \$5.00."

"One has to pay for extractions by one's self. Once I had a tooth taken out. I went into Los Angeles to have it done. I paid for it myself, because I know that the insurance doesn't pay for it."

In point of fact, however, the braceros' non-occupational insurance provides coverage for extractions, up to \$25.

22. Are you insured only against on-the-job accidents and sickness, only off-the-job accidents and sickness, or both?

About half the informants believed they were insured only against work-connected accidents and sickness. The other half believed (correctly) that they were covered both on-the-job and off-the-job. No informant felt he was covered only for off-the-job conditions, despite the fact this is the type of insurance for which braceros' payroll deductions are made. Braceros are covered by Workmen's Compensation but this, of course, is financed by employers.

23. If you were sick for two weeks, would you receive any pay for the time you lost from work?

Only one informant was aware that he was eligible for an indemnity under the terms of his non-occupational sickness and accident insurance policy. He did not know the amount to which he was entitled (\$10 per week, beginning the second week). No informant knew of the indemnity provisions of his Workmen's Compensation insurance: 65% of 95% of most recent wages, up to a maximum of \$50 per week; none for first week, unless disability exceeds seven weeks.

24. What do the following terms mean in the part of Mexico from which you come?

a. Salubridad publica (public health). Almost all informants had some idea of what this concept means. Several replies were couched solely in terms of government activity: "A thing of the government"; "Inspectors who come from a government center."

Others were vague or confused: "A good thing"; "Red and Green Cross"; "It orders a nurse for a hospital."

A third type of reply, and the most frequent, revolved around the notion of curing: "A department of the government which provides medical services free"; "An establishment concerned with curing the people"; "When they cure many people"; "Where one goes to be cured"; "That which is for the persons who do not have medical facilities."

A few informants mentioned such terms as "hygiene" and "cleanliness," but no one explicitly mentioned the concept of prevention of disease.

b. Penicillin. All but one or two informants could place this word, although most did so in very general terms: "A treatment to combat an illness"; "A medication for disinfecting"; "Good medicine"; "It is good for all"; "A medicine for the alleviation of various sicknesses"; "A marvellous drug"; "An injection." A handful of informants spoke with great precision, and most of them did so with reasonable accuracy: "A drug for the cure of venereal diseases"; "A drug which gave very good results during the Second World War"; "A medicine adapted to fevers". One man stated, "Penicillin is like calcium and vitamins."

c. Bruja (practitioner of black magic). Most informants admitted that they knew what this term meant in their region of Mexico, but several were at pains to dissociate themselves from the concept:

"In my part of the country, this is a witch who sucks blood from babies, but I don't believe in such a thing myself"; "A bruja is not a good person; I have never seen one; I don't believe in them"; "A person who is dedicated to superstitions"; "A woman who, some people believe, has supernatural powers"; "Formerly, people who cured by means of witchcraft". (Emphasis added. HPA)

A number of informants contrasted brujas with curanderas and hierberas by stating that the brujas operated illegally: "Personas que curan enfermedades no dentro de la moral (persons who cure illnesses outside of the law).

It is worth noting, furthermore, that this question alone, of all those in the questionnaire, frequently evoked an affective response -- one of amusement, often with overtones of embarrassment or nervousness.

d. Curandera. Few informants could (or would) identify this class of folk healer in the way which ethnographies of Mexico might lead one to expect. Several men defined curandera as "a doctor's assistant," or simply as "a nurse." Others defined the term ambiguously as "a woman who cures" or "a woman doctor." Several stated that they did not know what the word meant. A few gave anthropologically "correct" answers, such as, "A person who practices curing among persons who are not able to see doctors; persons who soban (massage)." "Persons who, in remote places, attend to medical needs." "Women who mend fractures and sprains." One informant volunteered the following experience:

"I remember a case of a curandera by the name of Carmen, who came to cure my sister. She used a cenicero (brazier) with hot charcoal, on which she put several chiles to smoke, saying that this would cure my sister. The only thing that it accomplished was to fill the room with smoke. It did not cure my sister. I was young and mischievous at the time, and I also was a little angry, because the curandera was charging us 50 pesos for the cure. So, I threw her cenicero with the chiles out of the room. After all, it would have been the same if someone had filled the room with cigarette smoke. This curandera was trying estafar a vistas de ojos (to swindle us in front of our very eyes). When I told the curandera that we no longer wanted her services, she cursed me and damned me. But she was not a curandera, she was only a swindler."

Another informant related a somewhat happier experience with a curandera.

"A friend of mine had a mysterious disease. His fingers and legs were all twisted. After trying various doctors, he went to a curandera. The formula that the curandera used was to bury him in the ground, with half of his body in and half of his body out of the ground. After a time, he was cured."

Still another informant told the following story:

In 1947, my sister was embrujada (bewitched) by her novio (sweetheart), whom she didn't like. Her novio persuaded a girl friend of his to give my sister a sandwich at one o'clock in the afternoon, this being the time when lunch is eaten in Mexico. This sandwich contained the bewitching formula. It caused my sister strong headaches. It was as if she had knives sticking in her head--all over her head. We took her to many doctors. We called in some of the best doctors in Guadalajara, the capitol city of Jalisco. None of the regular doctors could cure her. It was a very strange sickness, this bruja her novio had worked on her.

Then, we decided to resort to curanderos, who are like brujos (witches)--or, better yet, like espiritualistas (diviners). The curandero who attended my sister used a wax candle containing aceite de Santisimo (holy oil), and he used to pray orations from a little book.

He said that one day a pigeon would come to our house, and that this pigeon would be the novio. He said this pigeon would arrive at midnight. If we caught the pigeon, which was the symbol of my sister's sickness, the

bewitching force that her novio had worked on her would be defeated and my sister would be cured. We tried to catch the pigeon, but in vain. We were not successful.

Then, the curandero told us that a greyhound dog would appear in the patio of our house, also at midnight. He said that we should try to kill this animal who was also a symbol of my sister's disease. We watched and waited several nights, and then, sure enough, the dog arrived, just as the curandero had prophesied. Several of us tried to kill it with knives and hatchets, but the dog was like a tigre volador (flying tiger). The dog escaped unharmed.

After this, my sister became worse. She was bedridden day and night. Her appearance was frightening. Her face and her eyes were twisted. She would beat herself against the wall and against the bed like a martyr. When people saw my sister, they cried in sadness. The curandero said that the reason she was beating herself against the bed was as follows: they had made an image of her and were keeping it hidden and buried; whenever they took her out of where they had buried her, and beat the image, my sister had to beat herself against the bed.

The curandero said that the disease would last nine months, which came true. During those nine months she continued to beat herself against the wall and bed. The curandero said that after the nine months were up, which was the time he allotted her to live, that she would swell up like a sapo (frog) and would die. This is exactly what happened. When she died, her face swelled up, her entire body swelled up. Instead of burying her in 24 hours, as is the custom in Mexico, we had to bury her in 8 hours, because her body had swelled up and burst.

No one in this world could have cured my sister. Only God can cure this disease.

Just before my sister died, she said to me, referring to her novio who had bewitched her, perdonad a este hombre (forgive this man). This I have done.

- e. Empacho. No one seemed to have much trouble identifying this folk illness, although the answers were somewhat disparate:

"When one feels sick in the stomach, one says one has empacho. It is usually caused by an excess of food."

"One loses the appetite. The prevención is to take laxantes (laxatives)."

"It is a disease of the stomach caused by badly digested food. One cures it at home by taking herbs."

"Empacho is caused by eating comidas crudas (raw or unripe foods)."

"It is caused by eating comidas acedas (sour or unpleasant foods)."

"It is caused by eating any food which is not pleasing to one."

"It is caused by eating uncooked tortillas."

"It is caused by eating too much food, or foods which are not natural."

"Empacho is a swelling of the stomach caused by eating something bad."

"One knows one has it when one wants to vomit; food nauseates one. The proper prevención is to go to señoras que soban el empacho y desaparece (women who massage the empacho and it disappears).

It should be noted here, as in the case of all the illnesses which were discussed with braceros, that the word prevención was rarely taken to mean forethought or positive prevention of the disease itself, but was rather taken to mean something akin to what is called "secondary prevention" in this country--that is, the early arrest and treatment of symptoms.

- f. Bilis. Another folk illness, widely discussed in the literature dealing with Latin-American folk medicine. Here, again, one cannot but note the diversity in descriptions of the disease's symptomatology, causes, prevention, and cure.

"Bilisis la boca amarga (the bitter mouth). One gets it as the result of some other illness, or because one is angry, frightened, or surprised."

"People who have bilis turn a yellowish color and have an uncontrollable temper. It is caused by un coraje muy fuerte (a very intense anger), or by a fright. Peasants are accustomed to curing it by tomar bebidas (taking drinks; in this context, intoxicants), but a better prevención is to consult a doctor."

"You can tell if a person has bilis by the fact he is an extremely nervous person. He can't control his nerves."

"Bilis is characterized by having no strength in the body. It is caused by fear. I don't know how you could possibly prevent it; we all get it."

"It is a disease of the vesicles."

"It is a disease of the stomach, caused by some fright or anger."

"The symptoms of bilis are loss of appetite, and yellow eyes. The prevención is to take sedatives for the liver."

"In bilis, you have a bad taste in the mouth. It is caused by corajes externos y internos (anger one gives vent to or does not give vent to; literally, angers external and internal). The thing to do is evitar enojos (avoid annoyances)."

"Bilis is a sharp pain, a pain which 'really hits you.' It comes from the intestines not functioning well, and from people who are very ill-tempered. The only prevención is to be attended by a doctor."

"Bilis is often caused by fright or by disgustos (ill-temper, vexation, disgust). La prevención es un trago de aguardiente fuerte (the prevention is a shot of hard liquor)."

- g. Susto. There was more agreement in the definitions of this folk illness than in any other we discussed with our informants.

"The symptom of susto is nervousness. It is caused by seeing something which one does not expect."

"When one has susto, quiere adormecerse el cuerpo (the body wants to fall asleep)."

"It is caused by a sudden surprise. To prevent it, one must be energico (alert; literally, lively)."

"It is caused by a bad impression received from an unexpected piece of news."

"When one has susto, one feels panicky. One should not permit one's self to get excited."

"This is caused by anything unexpected. It consists of a sickness of the stomach and a faulty appetite. One should consult a doctor for prevención."

"If one were scared by some animal, he would get susto. The prevención is to drink water."

"Susto is a disease of decaimiento (weakness; decline)."

"Susto is characterized by a dry mouth. It comes from terror."

"It is caused by some danger or peril. The thing to do is to take many precautions."

"Susto is caused by seeing something which you did not anticipate. The only prevention is no ver (not to see)." (Laughter.)

- h. Mal de aire (or mal aire). Another folk illness. A good many informants said they had no idea what the phrase means. Others said:

"Its symptoms are pains that run throughout the body. It is caused by a wind that is introduced onto the body. One must protect one's self sufficiently."

"This is usually something that attacks little children. The symptoms are headaches and excoriations on the body. It is usually caused by being asleep and hot, and then getting up and going out into the cold air of the street. There are some remedios caseros (home remedies) which can prevent this,

but I don't know their names."

"Mal aire affects the eyes."

"It is caused by getting out of bed too rapidly. One feels desvanecido (dizzy)."

"Mal aire is like having a cold."

"Mal aire is characterized by irritation of the body. It is caused by bad weather."

"It is an enfriamiento muscular (muscular chill). It is caused by cold currents of air received by the organism that was warm."

- i. Mal ojo (or el ojo). This disease, the "evil eye", reportedly given wide credence throughout Mexico, drew an outright blank from our informants more often than any other. Those who did identify it, did so, for the most part, in altogether unexpected ways:

"In this illness, the eyes hurt. It is caused by a sudden wind."

"It makes the eyes turn red."

"Mal ojo is characterized by a swelling of the eyes and by ojos lagrimosos (tears in the eyes). It is caused by una batida de aire (a gust of air). To avoid it, one should avoid bad weather when there are apt to be strong and sudden winds."

"This is a disease in which the eyes become reddened. It occurs in los chiquillos (the little ones; small children). It occurs with the seasons. Nothing can be done about it."

"Mal ojo is burning eyes."

"It is an irritation of the eyes which is caused by going out into the cold air after being asleep."

"It is a sickness of the eyes caused by being out in the sun too much."

"It is eye pain caused by extreme heat."

"It is an infection of the eyes, often attacking children. Many people believe it is caused by the sun. They cure it with drops so that it does not become worse."

"El ojo is a disease of the eyes which affects little children. I am not familiar with the cause of this disease, though I would say that the best prevención would probably be some form of home remedy."

"This is an illness in the organism of children. It is a superstition."

(NOTE: This informant -- the only one who seemed to be on the track which we had anticipated -- declined to elaborate on his answer.)

25. If you were going to consult a doctor, in what order would you like him to have the following characteristics: courtesy, ability to speak Spanish, extensive medical education, extensive experience, personal interest in your case?

Results are still too scattered to permit any extended analysis of this question and its answers, but it appears at this early date as though "personal interest" is considered by most braceros to be the most important quality a doctor can possess. Knowledge of Spanish was given the top rating by the next largest number of informants. A few gave preference to "extensive experience." No one considered courtesy or extensive medical education to be most important. In fact, these two qualities were rather consistently classed as least important.

26. Do you believe that the braceros who return to Mexico are generally in better health than when they left Mexico?

Few of our questions aroused such interest, or such varied responses. Some informants felt that braceros tended to return to Mexico in better condition than when they had left:

"Ordinarily, yes. Many people in Mexico are not accustomed to having such advantages as personal hygiene, and, on coming here, the conditions make them change."

"Yes. It would be because here one eats at mealtimes, and in Mexico, many times, one does not."

"A la mayoría, les cae muy bien aquí (with the majority, it goes very well here).

Others felt that this was not the case at all:

"The men work too hard because of the inducement of high pay. They work much more than they have ever done in Mexico. They are not used to it; they break down. Also, there is much polvo (smog) in the air here, and this is not good."

"When braceros leave Mexico, they are healthy and robusto. Upon their return to Mexico after having been in the United States, they are descarnado (skinny), and sickly looking, and in general worse than when they left."

"An excess of work causes them to return in poor health. On the average, the braceros lose 13 or 14 pounds while they are in this country."

"In many cases, no, due to work accidents, and due to a way of life outside that which we are accustomed to."

A few informants took a middle position:

"Braceros usually return to Mexico in a condition which is dictated by the promedio de vida (way of life; literally, average of life) which they lead in this country. Some of us salimos fuera de la tanjenta (stray from the straight and narrow; literally, go off on tangents) and consequently we arrive in Mexico in poor health. Others of us follow a strict norma de vida (standard of life) and arrive in good health."

27. Would you like to return to the United States some day as a bracero?

Without exception, the informants answered "yes" to this question. Some indicated they would prefer to return to their present camp and continue in the same type of work; others named a variety of places they would like to go and a variety of agricultural jobs they would like to do, based on prior experiences as braceros. It is interesting to note that all who expressed such preferences, named places in California as their favorite locations for work.

28. Would you like to return to the United States some day under a visa?

All but one informant replied "yes" to this. Few could think of any type of work they might do under a visa other than farm labor. As one put it, dedicarme a la agricultura (I devote myself to agriculture). One or two indicated they would like to return as mayordomos (camp managers, stewards) which is a reasonable aspiration. In most of the camps visited so far, the second echelon of administrative personnel -- head cooks, assistant camp managers, etc. -- have been former braceros who made a good impression and were brought back under visas for this type of work.

29. Would you like to become a citizen of the United States?

Only one or two indicated they looked with any favor upon this idea. The question elicited from several an outpouring of patriotic feelings. For example:

"I never really appreciated what it means to be a Mexican until I was serving my time in the Army. One day in camp I was chosen as part of the honor guard to serve during the retreat of the colors. As I stood there with my rifle in my hand, and heard the music, and watched the flag being lowered, the tears came to my eyes, and I had difficulty in swallowing. I said to myself a silent vow that day: I will never desert you, Mexico."

30. Approximately how much money have you been able to send home during your present contract?

The amounts ranged from an average of \$25 per month for one man who had been

here a year, to \$200 per month for a man who had been here 6 months. The average among the men we have talked to so far is in the neighborhood of \$60 per month.

31. How does this amount compare with what you thought you would be able to send?
Most of the men said their earnings had been smaller than they had anticipated.

32. What is being done with the money which you are sending to Mexico?
Most of the informants reported the money is being spent for los gastos de la casa (household expenses). A few said that part of the money was being saved, para emergencias (for emergencies). Two of the men were putting relatives through school with their earnings.

33. By the time your contract has expired, how much money do you believe you will have been able to save?

The estimates ranged from \$100 to \$2,000, with the average a little under \$1,000. (It will be recalled that virtually all respondents expected to be in this country 18 months, meaning that they anticipated saving about \$50 a month. Note that this question has to do with savings, which in most cases are not to be confused with the sums sent home to Mexico, discussed above).

34. What do you hope to do with these savings?

Some specimen answers:

"Pay my debts; feed my family."

"Buy some land. I can buy land in my state, Jalisco, for 500 pesos an acre.

If I save \$1,000, that is over 12,000 pesos, and can buy much land."

"Improve my house and my property."

"Buy a cow and other animals."

"Start a little business for myself."

"Buy un terrenito (a little plot of land) in Mexico."

"Pay for the expenses of my trip up here; have a little fun."

"I expect to buy a house; at least, I will make a down payment."

"Para el pasaje, y para regresar aqui (for the journey, and in order to return here)."

"Simply to live better. I am also thinking of buying some heifers."

It can be seen from these answers that the majority of the men hoped to do something constructive with their savings. A minority apparently had no expectations of ever being anything but braceros.

35. What do you like most about the United States?

Several men responded in terms such as these:

"The parts where one is able to get good work."

"The jobs, and the standard of living."

"The abundance of work."

"El dinero, los todo! (The money is everything!)"

Most, however, gave answers of quite another order.

"I like ever thing about this country, especially the hospitality of the people I have met, even when I entered as an alambrista (wetback; literally, fence-jumper). Always, they have treated me well and paid me well."

"When I get back to Mexico, I will remember most the honesty and cleanliness of the people here."

"The way the people conduct themselves."

"The agricultural machinery."

"El respeto que hay en todo (literally, the respect that there is in everything.)"

35. (continued)

"I will remember many things about this country, but this one particular thing will always remain in my memory: The United States has been mi escuela (my school). Here is where I learned to speak English. Here is where I saw the nobility and honesty of the American people -- the friendliness that they have towards us. They always have roce social (social cohesion) with us, and they always treat us with sincerity."

here they have
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Three men were impressed by las vias de comunicaciones (methods of communication) in the United States. ~~The direct and rapid transportation routes, modes of social intercourse, or such types of communication as telephones, television, and mail service.~~ Finally, special mention should be made of a clustering of informants who were particularly struck by what might be called the democratic system:

"The thing I like most about this country is the impartial justice as against the partial justice of Mexico."

"I like your justice."

"The good treatment which the government gives."

"The type of control the government exercises."

And simply, "El gobierno (the government)."

36. What do you dislike about the United States?

Most informants were not able to name anything they disliked about this country, which may well reveal more about their courtesy than about their real opinions. Those who did reply to this question had widely varied things to say:

"The liberty of the families here does not please me. The fathers are not dueñas (masters) of their own families."

"I do not like the banks and Finance Companies here." (Note: this man had had an unfortunate experience involving an automobile which he bought on a time-plan.)

"The thing I most dislike about the United States is something the Americans have created for themselves. I am referring to racial discrimination, which is an evil that will take many years to dissipate."

37. Do you have any suggestions as to how the bracero program might be improved?

Again, most of the men had no suggestions, or at least declined to venture them. Some of those who did have suggestions were very vague:

"Que los tramites legales sean mejores (that the legal transactions be improved)."

"Give us the opportunity of a better contract."

Others were very much to the point:

"They should allow us to stay in this country longer."

"Set a fixed wage, at the time of being contracted. A camp like this should not be full. There is not enough work for everyone."

"Better barracks; better food."

"There are some camps that are acceptable, others that are not. Those that aren't should be improved. They should be improved in the sense of better feeding facilities, and better hygienic facilities. But, of course, we can't complain or else we are sent back to Mexico."

"Unless one is able to earn fairly by piece rates, they should give him work at an hourly rate."

38. Miscellaneous comments:

"There is a great deal of difference between the way braceros are treated in Arizona, where I formerly worked, and the way they are treated in California. The mayordomos in Arizona treat us worse. There are many Texans in Arizona, and Texans

38. (continued)

have never liked us. The servicios (conditions; literally, services) in Arizona are bad. All we had to do there was to pick cotton, and the pay was not very high. The braceros were lucky if they made from \$30 to \$40 a week, before deductions. Some made less. When it came time to pay us, there was puro tringuete (absolute swindling) going on. Some of the men had la suerte más voltiada (bad luck) and hardly earned any pay at all. There is also some difference between the harracas we lived in in Arizona, and those we live in here. Yes, there is muchísima diferencia between California and Arizona. California is much better."

"I have been to this country three times as a bracero. On each trip, I had to pay mordida (graft; literally, bite) in order to get a contract. In 1951, I paid 250 pesos; then, another 250 pesos for the next trip. In 1956, I had to pay 350 pesos. I didn't worry about having to stand in line at Empalme (the contracting station in Mexico) after having paid my mordida. I was put on a special list and was given a contract at Empalme and was always sent on to Callexico without delay. The people whom I gave the mordidas to were government agents, and it didn't matter whether they were Mexican or American agents -- todos son iguales (all are the same). I do not like this practice. It is hard to get the money to pay these government agents. If government has nothing to do with these practices, you understand -- it is the government employees who conduct these practices. We, the braceros, are actually the guilty ones. When the braceriada (bracero program) first started, we would pay the government agents mordiditas of 5, 10, or 20 pesos -- little presents for little favors. In this way, we converted these government men into agentes sin verguenzas (agents without shame). These agents, for the most part, hang out in small towns where there are tontos (fools) who will pay them these mordidas in order to get contracted faster. For my part, I paid mine in the city of Guadalajara. I am absolutely certain that this money is not a legitimate payment. ¡Es mordida! Con toda la intención de mi palabra, ¡es mordida! (It is graft! With the full meaning of the word, it is graft!)"

"When the braceros return to Mexico, they all return with ideas about sanitation, hygiene, food, etc. They come back with many ideas. Besides coming up here to work, we also observe. We want a better future. We realize that one's house should always be clean. We see clean gardens, clean streets in this country. We are always trying to better ourselves. But we do not have the same things in Mexico, and so after being in Mexico for a while, we consequently forget about these things. In any case, many of us cannot take action based on our ideas, since we lack the means to do so."

"¿Qué provecho tendría su estudio para nosotros? (What benefit will your study have for us?)